

Standards-Based Grading

Frequently Asked Questions



Where ALL students learn, grow and succeed.

What is standards-based grading?

Standards-based grading measures your student's mastery of the essential standards for a class, or how well your student understands the material in class. At the beginning of every unit the teacher will break down the standards for the unit into smaller objectives. During the unit the student is assessed to see if they truly know the material using a variety of assessments, such as traditional pencil-and paper tests, projects, discussions, or reports. The class grade will be based on all of the evidence the teacher collects demonstrating mastery for the essential standards.

The goal of this approach is to provide the teacher, student, and parent as accurate a picture as possible of the student's learning and to encourage a dialogue about how the student can master the material for the class. In particular, because learning is a process that takes place over time, each assessment will provide feedback for the student about what to focus on next, and the student will be allowed to retake assessments. If the new assessments shows a higher level of mastery, that new score replaces the old one.

How is standards-based grading different from traditional grading?

In the traditional 100-point grading system, a student's grades are typically based on all the work assigned in class, including classwork, homework, projects, quizzes, and tests. These scores are often arranged in the grade book based on the type of assignment rather than on the essential standard for the class. The grade book also include points for non-academic factors, such as participation or effort.

Standards-based grading in Sheridan will separate out tests, quizzes, projects and other assessments into an academic grade that will account for 80 percent of a student's overall course grade. Classwork and homework (practice) will account for 10 percent of the student's overall course grade. Other non-academic factors, such as participation or effort (personal Management) will account for the final 10 percent of the student's overall course grade.

Why is the district changing to standards-based grading?

The goal of the Sheridan School District is to report grades that are accurate, consistent, meaningful, and supportive of learning. The change to standards-based grading is an effort to reach that goal. Here is how standards-based grading addresses each of those four criteria.

Accurate: By basing the student's grade on academic factors, the teacher creates a clear picture of what the student has learned without the influence of other factors. Other factors, such as effort and participation, are still essential and are a part of the student's overall course grade.

Consistent: Using standards establishes clear expectations learning and applies those expectations consistently throughout the unit and semester.

Meaningful: A meaningful grade is one that clearly communicates what learning has taken place. In a standards-based classroom, scores are recorded by the essential standards rather than by type, such as tests or homework, making it easier to identify areas of strength and to address areas of concern for each student.

Supportive of Learning: Standards-based grading supports learning by focusing on the material that has or has not been learned rather than on accumulating points to reach a certain total. The reassessment policy also supports student learning by allowing new levels of learning to replace old when a student show improvement on an assessment.

What do the scores on the 4.0 scale mean?

The scores on the 4.0 scale each have a very specific meaning. They are:

- **4.0:** The student demonstrates an in-depth understanding of the material by completing advanced applications of the material.
- **3.0:** The student has mastered the complex, targeted knowledge and skills for the class.
- **2.0:** The student understands the foundational material that supports the targeted learning, but is still working to master the complex material of the class.
- **1.0:** The student is able to demonstrate an understanding of the foundational material for the class with help from the teacher, but still struggles when working independently.
- **0.0:** Even with assistance from the teacher, the student shows no understanding of the material.

The intermediate scores (i.e. 1.3, 2.5) are used to show that a student has shown partial mastery of the next level of learning.

What is the grade scale for standards-based grading?

A:	3.21 - 4.00
B:	2.41 - 3.20
C:	1.61 - 2.40
D:	0.81 - 1.60
F:	0.00 - 0.80

This conversion scale sets clear expectations for student learning. In order to receive credit for a class, a student must, with help, show and understanding of the foundational skills taught in the class. The C range shows that a student understands all of the foundational skills without help, and a B range requires a student to master all of the complex, targeted knowledge in the class. Finally, to receive an A, the student must show an in-depth, advanced understanding of the material.

If the letter grades are the same for traditional and standards-based grading, why do the percentages look different in eSchool?

eSchool has certain limitations, and teachers have to work within those limitations. When you check your student’s grades in eSchool, you will see your student’s letter grade and a percent for each class. The letter grade is the same for both traditional and standards-based scale, but due to eSchool’s limitations, the percentages will look different. The chart below shows the alignment of the different scales.

eSchool percent	=	letter grade	=	traditional	=	standards-based
80.3 - 100		A		90 - 100		3.21- 4.00
60.3 - 80.2		B		80 - 89		2.41 - 3.20
40.3 - 60.2		C		70 - 79		1.61 - 2.40
20.3 - 40.2		D		60 - 69		0.81 - 1.60
0 - 20.2		F		0 - 59		0.00 - 0.80

All assessments will be entered based on the 4-point scale. Using this scale is the best way to address the technical limitations of eSchool.

How will my student be assessed?

Your student’s learning will be assessed using a variety of formative and summative assessments. These tools will include formal assessments such as traditional paper-and-pencil tests, projects, lab reports, or verbal assessments, but they may also include informal assessments such as classroom discussions or teacher observations. Essentially, everything that a student does in a standards-based class provides the teacher with evidence of the student’s learning.

What can my student do to raise their grade in a standards-based class?

The goal in a standards-based class is on ensuring that students master the essential standard for the class, so any efforts to raise your student’s grade will have the same goal. Your student should meet with the teacher to determine which standards need improvement and create a plan on how to relearn the material and when to be reassessed. If your student demonstrates a higher level of mastery on the assessment, then the grade for that standard will be increased and your student’s grade will increase. Again, the focus is on improving your student’s mastery of the material, so extra credit points are not used in standards-based classes.

What does my student need to do in order to be reassessed?

After completing an assessment in a standards-based class, the student can ask for a reassessment using the process described below.

1. The student meets with the teacher to develop a plan including activities for relearning the material.

2. The student completes the relearning activities.
3. Together, the student and teacher will decide when, where and how the student will be reassessed.
4. This process supports your student's learning by
 - a. Ensuring that relearning takes place before reassessment.
 - b. Identifying the specific steps the student must complete to be reassessed.
 - c. Clarifying the reassessment process for both the teacher and student.
 - d. Identifying exactly how the student will be reassessed so there are no surprises.

If you have any additional questions about the reassessment process, please contact your student's teacher.

Why should my student do the homework if it isn't included in the academic grade?

Homework is still included in a student's overall grade for the course. Homework is included in the home/classwork category which accounts for 10 percent of the overall course grade.

Are non-academic factors, such as effort and participation part of the class grade?

These factors are part of the overall course grade and are included in the Personal Management category which accounts for 10 percent of the overall course grade.

How will standards based grading affect my student's GPA and transcript?

Standards-based grading reports an overall letter grade for each course, so it does not have any impact on your student's grade point average or transcript.

If we change school districts, how will my student's grade be transferred if the new district does not use standards-based grading?

When a student transfers to a new district, the transfer grade is determined by the student's current letter grade. For example, if the student currently has an average of 3.00 on the standards-based scale the current letter grade is a B, so the transfer grade is sent as a B.

How can I get more information about my student's grade or about standards-based grading?

If you have questions or concerns about your student's grade in a class or if you would like more information on standards-based grading, please contact the teacher of that class for more information.